Entitlement to senior citizens

1551. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what are the benefits to which the senior citizens after crossing the age of 60 years, are entitled to on Indian Railways, Air Travels and Income Tax payments and other facilities;

(b) whether there are any variations in entitlement in the age limits of 60 to65 years and second in the age limits of 56 and above;

(c) what are the details thereof; and

(d) what are the reasons of such variations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) to (c) A number of benefits are available to senior citizens. Some of them are enumerated below:

(i) Ministry of Railways extends 30% concessions to individuals of the age of 60 years and above, in mail/express fares of all classes and the fares of Rajdhani/Shatabdi/Jan Shatabdi trains.

(ii) Indian Airlines provides 50% discount on the normal economy class fare to citizens, who have completed 65 years of age in the case of male passengers and 3 years of age in the case of female passengers on the date of commencement of journey, subject to certain conditions. Besides, other domestic airlines also provide concessions in airfare to senior citizens according to their own policy.

(iii) Under the Income-tax Act, the individuals resident in India and having attained the age of 65 years and above during the financial year have been provided,—

(a) a higher exemption limit of rupees one lakh eighty five thousand for payment of income tax;

(b) a higher limit of deduction on account of disability, treatment of certain diseases, etc.

(iv) Investment made by senior citizens above the age of 60 years (including the persons above the age of 55 years, but less than

60 years and having retired on superannuation or otherwise) in Senior Citizens Savings Scheme, 2004 is eligible for higher rate of interest *i.e.,* 9 per cent per annum.

(d) The variation in the age limit for senior citizens is due to the difference in the purpose for grant of such concessions.

Development of infrastructure facilities

1552. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any recommendations from Investment Commission for the development of infrastructure facilities in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are considering to accept their suggestions and recommendations to all round development of infrastructure facilities in the country; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) Yes Sir, The Investment Commission (IC) in its report "Investment Strategy for India" of February, 2006 has made a set of broad recommendations to facilitate and improve the investment climate. The main recommendations are: (i) Remove/ reduce restriction on sector caps and entry route on sectors other than those considered "Strategic" (ii) Provide labour flexibility (iii) Promote SEZs for key sectors (iv) Provide a level playing field in sectors with PSU dominance (v)Eliminate scope for discretionary interpretation to stem corruption (vi) Establish effective mechanisms to resolve centre-state issues, and (vii) Create National Thrust Areas which include Tourism, Power, Textiles and Agro-processing. Sector specific recommendations in respect of infrastructure sectors are given in the statement (See below).

(c) and (d) The IC observed that as a result of their extensive investor interactions, many representations on policy/procedures or other impediments were resolved through reference to Government.